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Embodiments of Power

Duindam, Jeroen

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Gary B. Cohen and Franz A. J. Szabo, eds. *Embodiments of Power: Building Baroque Cities in Europe*.

Austrian and Habsburg Studies 10. New York: Berghahn Books, 2008. xiv + 283 pp. index. illus. bibl. \$90. ISBN: 978-1-84545-433-3.

Embodiments of Power includes an introduction and ten papers presented at a conference in Minneapolis in September 2003. The authors discuss the “baroquization” (10) of thirteen cities: Wrocław, Kraków, Prague, Dresden, Munich, Nuremberg, Graz, Innsbruck, Vienna, Salzburg, Rome, Naples, and Madrid. Essays on the Spanish and Austrian Habsburg domains and cities in central Europe form the core of the collection. It reaches from the later Middle Ages to the later eighteenth century, with special emphasis on the phase from ca. 1560–1720. In the introduction, Gary Cohen and Franz Szabo argue that the restructuring of Baroque cities rarely was an entirely unilateral process dictated by the ruler. It reflected an interplay of topography, artistic, political, and social influences, usually with the prince, church institutions, and local elites as dominant actors. The editors also provide brief summaries of the contributions — six written by historians, four by art historians. Papers differ in approach from coherent analytical expositions to descriptions of artistic and social changes. There is no dominant thesis that connects the papers, although all authors stress local variation and the importance of specific circumstances.

In a long opening paper, Mark Hengerer argues that Graz and Innsbruck, two regional Habsburg residences abandoned by their rulers in the course of the seventeenth century, did not closely follow the example of the emerging metropolis

Vienna, but were formed by circumstances relating to physical environment, local religious and social makeup, as well as distance from the center of Habsburg power. A brief paper by Roswitha Juffinger describes the dominant presence of the archbishops in Salzburg. Howard Louthan shows the strengthening of Bohemian Catholic confessional art, partly in response to Habsburg dynastic policies after 1620, but with a marked native share. Jiri Pesek takes up this last point, downplaying the presence of Vienna as example, by suggesting that both Wrocław and Prague knew a largely autonomous development, and had their own connections to the empire and Italy. Jan Harasimowicz describes the artistic developments in Dresden, Wrocław, and Kraków, three cities along the commercial axis connecting Western Europe and Kievan Russia — an interesting viewpoint opening a paper that remains mostly descriptive. Barbara Marx shows how Dresden developed from a Protestant stronghold into a baroque capital — finally, in the course of the eighteenth century, opening up the elector's collections to a wider public. Marx also introduces the highly relevant theme of dynastic and intercity competition, by adding the Hohenzollern renovation of Berlin to her paper. Jeffrey Chipps Smith shows in a fruitful comparison how Nuremberg's conversion to Lutheranism heralded a gradual decline, whereas Munich gained superiority as the new Wittelsbach residence, and soon electoral capital. The rise of one city can be attributed clearly to its emergence as a capital, the decline of the other at least partly to its increasing political distance from the Catholic emperor and the loss of the rich patronage of the church. Thomas Dandeleat convincingly shows how Rome's growth was in fact contingent upon Spanish financial and military support: from this perspective Rome can indeed be seen as a "Spanish imperial city." John Marino analyzes evocative details about the festivities for Saint John in Naples. David Ringrose, finally, gives a succinct yet very convincing overview of Madrid's development, from the sixteenth to the later eighteenth century. The Bourbon dynasty, Ringrose makes clear, approached the city in an entirely different way, restructuring it as a coherent spatial structure with public spaces, thoroughfares, and conspicuous public buildings.

The chapters are somewhat uneven in length, approach, and quality, yet the volume as a whole does convey some general structures as well as variable patterns in the development of Baroque cities. Several themes emerge: the often-haphazard development of cities, as an interplay between many groups and forces; the relevance of a dominant (often dynastic) actor for city development; the impact of competition among rival dynasties and cities; the redefinition of meeting points (socially and spatially) between rulers and subjects emerging in the eighteenth century. While these themes could have been dealt with more systematically, this book certainly offers a useful addition to the expanding literature on cities, courts, and the politics of space.

JEROEN DUINDAM
Rijksuniversiteit Groningen